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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 001551

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IN](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: TERRORIST THREATS MARR SUCCESSFUL KASHMIR POLLS

REF: NEW DELHI 749

Classified By: DCM Robert O. Blake, Jr. for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: The February J&K municipal elections produced largely positive results. Participation, among the most important criteria of the campaign, was high. However, during the campaign, many candidates withdrew, and many newly-elected councillors from the Valley have since resigned, gone into hiding, or fled to India. End Summary.

Another Solid Electoral Exercise

12. (C) Observers continue to watch elections in J&K more closely than in many other Indian states for a number of reasons, including: to gauge the credibility of the electoral process. In the third major electoral exercise since the Legislative Assembly elections in 2002, the voting process was again credible. There were no reports of voter intimidation. Voter participation was higher than at any time since 1989. This was not a result of greatly increased pro-India sentiment in the Valley, but rather a result of the fact that, with each successful election, Kashmiris have fewer reasons to reject the electoral process as illegitimate, as they see their influence over the process. Polling ranged from the low teens to mid-20 percent even in separatist bastions such as Shopian, "Srinagar's "Gaza" (Maisuma), and the Valley. Journalists in the Valley tell us that threats and intimidation from insurgents were much more responsible for keeping Kashmiri voters away from the polls. The governing PDP did fairly well in South Kashmir, while the NC did well in Srinagar and parts of Central and North Kashmir, but neither party won a majority. Large numbers of women (30 percent of total turnout was female) and young people participated, both as candidates and voters. Security Dominates the Aftermath

13. (C) Terrorist intimidation, however, has taken some of the shine from the results:

-- During the campaign, large numbers of candidates withdrew their names from consideration, and many newly-elected councillors from the Valley fled to India. -- Terrorists killed relatively few (five) candidates, political workers (five), and their relatives and friends, and few injuries were reported. -- The J&K government has gone to some lengths to address these security concerns after Omar Abdullah threatened to withdraw all NC representatives from the state assembly. SIPDIS assuaged concerns somewhat, while unusually harsh winter conditions in the state have diverted attention. He expected concerns to be alleviated. -- Journalists speculate that councillors from the Valley who have fled to Jammu are likely to trickle back by the end of the Winter Session. Comment

14. (C) These elections are another important success for the J&K government. Although likely to try to reduce the effectiveness of these elections, the government has done well.

15. (C) It will not be clear until later in the year whether councillors' security will be as much of an issue as appears to be the case at present. MULFORD